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November 4, 2013

Administrator Gina McCarthy
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, D.C. 20460

Dear Administrator McCarthy,

I am encouraged that Deputy Administrator Bob Perciasepe said publicly on Nov. 1 that the EPA is working on adding “more venues for input” so that more Americans can express their views on greenhouse gas regulations targeting coal fired power plants. While Deputy Administrator Perciasepe did not announce the location or character of these additional venues for public comments, I am writing to again request that at least one of these additional sessions be held in West Virginia.

Last month, I introduced House Concurrent Resolution 59 along with 34 bipartisan cosponsors calling on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to hold listening sessions on the agency’s proposed greenhouse gas rules for existing coal plants in the 15 states that generate the nation’s highest percentage of electricity from coal. Since that time a growing number of other leaders, including a bipartisan group of United States senators and a coalition of state Chambers of Commerce, have similarly requested that the EPA hold additional listening sessions on the existing coal plant rules.

West Virginia generates a higher percentage of its electricity from coal than any other state. More than 95 percent of West Virginia’s electricity is generated by coal-fired power plants. Because my state is the leader in electricity production from coal, West Virginia’s energy consumers will be hurt more than energy consumers in any other state by the EPA’s plan to impose additional regulations on existing coal-fired power plants. Additionally, West Virginia ranks second in the nation in coal production, mining nearly 130 million tons of coal in 2012 at operations that directly employ more than 21,000 people. Regulations targeting coal-fired power plants would certainly have a negative impact on coal production and employment in my state.

On Sept. 30, 2013, the EPA announced public listening sessions in 11 cities. None of these announced listening sessions will be held in one of the ten states that generate the highest percent of electricity from coal or in one of the top three coal producing states. The EPA’s

announcement states that feedback from the listening sessions “will play an important role in helping EPA develop smart, cost-effective guidelines that reflect the latest and best information available.”

It is difficult to imagine how the EPA could obtain the “best information available” from which to develop a “smart, cost-effective” regulation without listening to the people in the states most reliant on coal for electricity. Given West Virginia’s unique perspective as the state that generates the highest percentage of its electricity from coal and as the second-leading producer of coal, West Virginians have a special interest in sharing their views on regulatory efforts targeting existing power plants.

The EPA should follow through on Deputy Administrator Perciasepe’s pledge to expand avenues for public participation in the rule making process and West Virginia should be at the top of the list of locations for additional listening sessions. I would be happy to work with you and your staff to facilitate a listening session in West Virginia.

Thank you for your attention to this item of vital importance to workers and energy consumers in West Virginia.

Sincerely,



Shelley Moore Capito
Member of Congress